

SAMPLE



# TALENT MAGNET

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**HOW TO ATTRACT AND  
KEEP THE BEST PEOPLE**



**MARK MILLER**

Bestselling author of *Leaders Made Here*  
and *Chess Not Checkers*

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# Introduction

## ***Increase the caliber of your players and you increase your chances of winning.***

Because this principle is universally understood, finding and keeping the best people has become a preoccupation for many leaders. However, convincing talented people to join our organizations has only become more difficult in recent years.

Our never-ending quest for the most talented people has been made even more difficult by changing demographics, fluctuating employment statistics, increased competition, and shifting expectations. These forces have left many organizations with a critical shortfall of people. The effect: a virtual war for talent. The research, and the book you now hold were born in this context.

Given the growing need for talented people, my team wondered: *What is really required to attract “Top Talent?”*

What do you do when you have a question? You Google it. What do you do if Google doesn't know the answer? You either put your question in the “too hard pile” or find the answer for yourself. That's where we

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found ourselves. The answers at our disposal were somewhere between inadequate and nonexistent.

Our next step was to contact global thought leaders in the area of human resources—surely, they could tell us what attracts Top Talent. We were shocked time and time again after being told, “No one has done the research to answer your question.”

Finally, with no credible answers readily available, we decided to commission the work ourselves.

After a ground-breaking, quantitative study focused specifically on what attracts Top Talent, combined with hundreds of face-to-face interviews with top performers and on-the-job ethnography, the chief insight, among many:

***What attracts and keeps Top Talent  
is different from what attracts  
and keeps typical talent.***

This book will not only clarify these differences; it can serve as a mirror for you and your organization. Are you really offering what Top Talent wants? If not, why not? And, don't be surprised if, along the way, you are challenged regarding how you see your role as a leader.



# The War for Talent

*“How could this be happening?”* Blake thought.

He had just walked out of a meeting with his Human Resources team. They had informed him they would not be able to staff the company’s near-term plans and suggested to Blake he reduce the organization’s growth goals. They could see no way to find enough qualified people to hit their targets. The shortfall was large—and growing.

His team explained the elements of a perfect storm—a mix of economic, demographic, and competitive pressures all coming to bear simultaneously. The result: they had been thrust into the ‘war for talent.’

Blake was not used to this type of news. Since becoming the CEO, his early decision to build a high-performance organization had paid huge dividends. All the outcome metrics had continued to climb. This new information could change everything. Blake knew people were central to their success. Suddenly, over the course of one short meeting, people had now become his greatest point of vulnerability.

Although the recommendation of his team was unexpected, if Blake was *totally* honest with himself,

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the early warning signs of an impending storm had been in the air for months. A combination of his optimism, overdelegation, and busyness had prevented him from connecting the dots sooner.

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As he reflected on what he had missed, he remembered losing several key people recently. More troubling, he recalled each of the top candidates for their replacements declined offers to join his organization. And, to make matters worse, he could also recall a few clues that their talent pipeline was looking more like a dripping faucet. For example, Blake wrote personal notes to new employees; he hadn't been asked to write as many in the previous months.

What Blake had once considered a Human Resources issue had now clearly become *his* issue. He couldn't help but wonder if perhaps he should have taken a bigger interest in this topic years ago.



As Blake walked to his car, his thoughts shifted to the dinner he was about to attend. It was a peer-mentoring group—eight CEOs from a diverse set of businesses.

Tonight would be their first meeting. Potential discussion topics had been submitted in advance to the moderator. As he drove to the event, he wondered what the group would address. He had submitted three potential topics; unfortunately, staffing was not one of them.

Over dinner, the attendees engaged in casual conversation and introductions. In addition to ethnic, gender, and age diversity, these leaders represented industries from totally different sectors: high tech, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, construction, education, healthcare, and even a global nonprofit organization.

As dessert was being served, Martha Livingston called the group to order. "Welcome," she said with a warm, inviting smile. "Thanks for agreeing to be part of this experiment. My hypothesis is simple: we can learn from each other. Tonight is our first opportunity to see if I'm right or not.

"As we discussed previously via email, we will address one topic per meeting. The objective is to share what we're learning about a given issue. Tonight, based on an overwhelming level of interest, we're going to talk about how to find and keep talented people."

Blake breathed a sigh of relief.

Martha continued, "I'll kick off the conversation. I've been in business for forty-five years, and this may be the biggest talent mess I have ever seen. If

we can't crack the code soon, we're going to have to slow our growth plans."

Bart Elkrige nodded his head and agreed. "I can get people," he said. "People aren't the problem. It's the caliber of people I worry about. Ours is a complicated business. Not just anyone can, or is willing, to do the hard work we require."

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One by one the attendees spoke, each addressing the problem but no one offering any solutions.

"Hi, I'm Blake. It's been energizing to hear from each of you. I'm the least experienced guy here. I've only been in my role about a decade, and I've never seen the talent challenge this bad. But, here's my view: The world is still full of talented men and women. Some of you referred to them as A players. They still want to work and are eager to contribute. Why don't we go get them?"

Martha responded, "Blake, I love your spirit. That is why we're here—to find answers, not just to commiserate. What do you suggest we do?"

"I'm not sure. But I am committed to doing something," Blake said. Several others nodded in agreement. "I'm going to engage my staff to work on some potential solutions."

“Haven’t you done that already?” Betsy Roberson, head of the global nonprofit, asked.

“Not really,” Blake confessed. “I knew it was an emerging issue, but until recently, I was unaware of the magnitude of the situation. Honestly, when Martha announced our topic for tonight, I was hoping one of you had already figured it out.”

“Nope!” Bart laughed. “I was hoping the same thing. That’s why it was number one on my list.”

“No answers,” Martha sighed, “but at least we had a good dinner.”

“I know we agreed to address a different topic at each meeting, but could we talk about this again next month?” Blake asked.

“Only if you guys bring some solutions,” Martha said in a tone that made the group feel they all had homework to do.



At home, Blake’s son Clint opened the handwritten letter. It arrived looking like the more than 7,000 miles it had traveled, dusty and crumpled on the edges. He knew immediately it was from his friend Baako—the primitive block letters composing the address were the final clue. The two had met on a school trip last spring.

Clint was only sixteen, but thanks to his father’s influence and insistence, he already had done more than most his age. One of the adventures Blake had sponsored for his son was to travel to an emerging

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country. Blake's father had placed a high priority on global awareness and had done the same for him when he was a teenager. A consequence of this exposure was a level of compassion and empathy hard to get any other way.

As Clint read the letter, his eyes filled with tears.

*"My little sister Amara died today. I wanted to tell you. She considered you a friend. They say it was the water that killed her. . . ."*

Clint thought, *"How can that be? The water? How is that possible?"*

In an instant he remembered, there was *no water* in Amara's village. She walked several hours every day to find water. Clint's pain intensified when he realized she probably had carried the contaminated water that took her life.

He was angry, frustrated, and confused all wrapped up together. He knew he couldn't help Amara, but he also knew he had to do something.



Blake was driving home from dinner with the CEOs when he received the call from Clint telling him about his letter from Baako and Amara's death.

"I understand. I know you want to do something. Of course, I'll help. Tomorrow's Saturday. Let's you and I go out for breakfast and talk about options."

## About the Author

Mark Miller is a best-selling author, business leader, and communicator.

Mark began writing almost twenty years ago when he teamed up with Ken Blanchard, co-author of *The One Minute Manager*, to write *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*. The book you now hold in your hand is his seventh. With over 1,000,000 books in print, in more than 25 languages, Mark's global impact continues to grow.

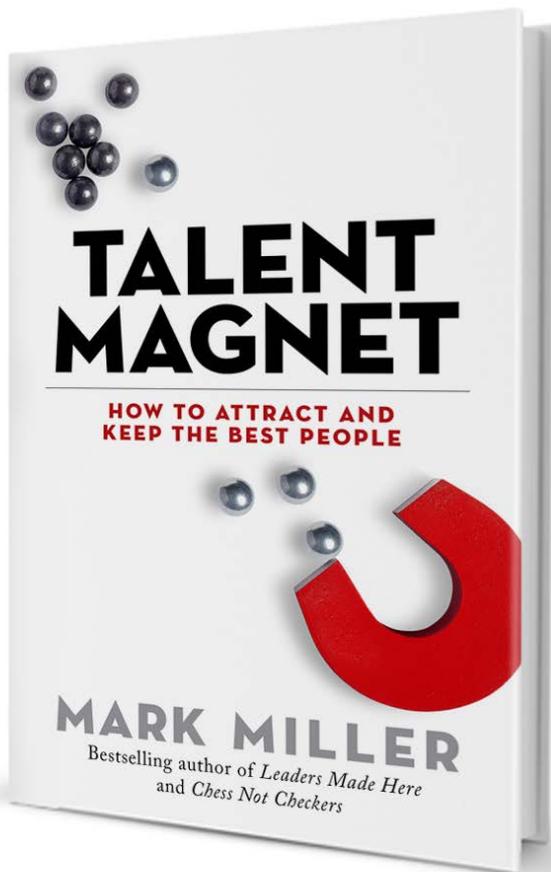
In addition to his writing, Mark enjoys speaking to leaders. Over the years, he's traveled to dozens of countries teaching for numerous international organizations. His theme is always the same: encouraging and equipping leaders!

Mark started his Chick-fil-A career working as an hourly team member in 1977. In 1978, he joined the corporate staff working in the warehouse and mailroom. Since that time, he has provided leadership for Corporate Communications, Field Operations, Quality and Customer Satisfaction, Training and Development, and Leadership Development. During his tenure with Chick-fil-A, the company has grown from 75 restaurants to over 2,300 locations with annual sales approaching \$10 billion.

Mark lives an active lifestyle. As a photographer, he enjoys shooting in some of the world's hardest-to-reach places, past locations include: Antarctica, Everest Base Camp, the jungles of Rwanda and the Galapagos Islands.



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